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President: Mr. Freitas do Amaral ..... (Portugal)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Tribute to the memory of Judge Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley, member of the International Court of Justice

The President: Before we take up the item on our agenda for this afternoon, I must with deep regret inform the General Assembly that Judge Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley, a member of the International Court of Justice, passed away on 24 October 1995.

Judge Aguilar Mawdsley, a distinguished diplomat and jurist, had a long and close association with the United Nations. He had served as Chairman of several Main Committees of the General Assembly, as Permanent Representative of his country to the United Nations, as President of the Security Council and as Head of the delegation of Venezuela to a number of major United Nations conferences, notably the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea. Judge Aguilar Mawdsley had been a member of the International Law Commission since 1979 and a member of the Court since 6 February 1991.

In his long and distinguished career, he made important contributions in various fields, in particular in the fields of diplomacy and international law.

I am sure that I interpret the sentiments of the General Assembly in expressing its condolences to the President of the Court and his colleagues. I would also like to ask the delegation of Venezuela to accept, and to transmit to the Government of Venezuela and Judge Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley's bereaved family, our expression of sympathy at this sad loss.

I invite the General Assembly to stand for one minute in silent tribute to the memory of Judge Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I now call on the representative of Venezuela.

Mr. De Rosas (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Venezuela would like to say how grateful we are for the very kind and generous words that you, Sir, have just spoken about Judge Aguilar on his passing away yesterday. Be assured that we will convey them to our Government and to Judge Aguilar's family.

Programme of work

The President: I should like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/INF/50/5/Add.1, which contains a tentative programme of work and schedule of plenary meetings for the rest of October and the month of November. This addendum supersedes document A/INF/50/5 and the announcement I made on 12 October. This schedule is being issued to assist delegations in planning their work. For its part, the Secretariat will endeavour to ensure that

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the relevant documentation is available to delegations in advance of the discussion of any given agenda item.

I should further point out that there are still a few agenda items for which no date has been indicated. I will announce the dates for the consideration of those items in due course and sufficiently in advance. I will also keep the Assembly informed of any additions or changes.

I should like to inform Members that agenda item 28, entitled "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina", will not be taken up on the morning of Tuesday, 31 October, as scheduled. The item will be considered at a later date to be announced.

The list of speakers for each of the items listed in document A/INF/50/5/Add.1 is now open.

As I mentioned to the Assembly in my earlier announcement, I hope to keep close to this schedule so that the Assembly can discharge its responsibilities as effectively and expeditiously as possible. I again appeal to those representatives submitting draft resolutions to do so sufficiently in advance of the dates fixed for consideration of items to give members adequate time to examine them.

I should also like to remind representatives that additional time is needed for draft resolutions involving changes in the work programme or additional expenditures since they will require the preparation of a statement of programme budget implications by the Secretary-General. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee will need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before it can be acted on by the Assembly.

While on the subject of draft resolutions, I should like to inform members that in view of the number of draft resolutions expected under agenda item 20, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", and the possible need to hold consultations on them with a view to reaching consensus, the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under agenda item 20 will be Friday, 10 November 1995.

Last but not least, I should like to ask delegations to continue to keep in mind the limitation of Secretariat services, resulting from the financial crisis facing the Organization.

Agenda item 105 *(continued)*

Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Commemoration to mark the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year

The President: This afternoon, the General Assembly will hold the second of the plenary meetings to mark the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year and to consider, with a view to adopting it, the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

I now call on the representative of Norway, Ms. Ingrid Nordbø, Youth Representative.

Ms. Nordbø (Norway): As a youth representative of Norway to the General Assembly it is a great honour and a pleasure for me to focus on youth and global youth policy in a plenary meeting of the Assembly.

Let me at the outset express my appreciation of the fact that the fiftieth session of the General Assembly, which is also the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, has focused on a draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. We regret that there has been no consensus on the draft text. We hope, nevertheless, that Governments will use the draft Programme as a guideline for further development of national youth policy.

Youth is a part of the population with specific needs and potentials. Young people are not solely human beings passively waiting to enter adulthood; nor are we a more demanding and troublesome version of the child. Youth is a stage marked by strong sentiments and values. It is a period of life characterized by enthusiastic energy combined with a critical view of the established structures of society.

The youth of today is experiencing a rapidly changing world. Some aspects of the global development are not causing positive effects. Our vulnerable environment is suffering from pollution, and devastating wars are going on in several parts of the world. Recent decades have increased our consciousness that the Earth is fragile. It is more crucial than ever that it be populated by responsible and concerned people, ready to unite their efforts in finding global solutions. In order to strengthen

this feeling of responsibility and concern, youth must be given the opportunity actively to take part in the shaping of society. We must be given a fair opportunity to influence decision-making at all levels. The fiftieth session of the General Assembly has discussed the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The United Nations has recognized the need for a global youth policy. I hope that this will lead to a greater awareness of the specific needs of youth, not only in the Governments here present, but also in the various United Nations agencies which are working with youth in the field around the world.

I would like to draw attention specifically to one of the priority areas mentioned in section IV J of the draft Programme, entitled "Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making". The Programme stresses the importance of enabling youth to participate actively in order to be integrated into and to influence the society they are, and will be, living in. It is important that youth at an early stage be able to use their resources and energy in constructive contribution to the decision-making processes, and not give up because of the overwhelming challenges the world is facing. A feeling of resignation amongst youth must be prevented. The successful implementation of the important results of the Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing Conferences needs the active support of all generations.

Youth organizations should be recognized as schools of democracy. Through active participation, young people will gain experience in how democracy works. Recognizing youth organizations as important arenas for developing skills necessary for efficient participation in society, Governments should facilitate their existence by respecting full freedom of association, and should contribute with financial, moral and organizational support.

In Vienna four years ago, a global youth forum brought together 150 representatives of national, regional and international youth non-governmental organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. In 1996 another United Nations youth forum is scheduled. The United Nations system should provide financial resources to ensure that the event can take place. The Organization should encourage Governments to include youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly and other United Nations events. This will give youth an opportunity to influence and share their ideas and perspectives with decision-makers within the United Nations system. Further, it is a valuable experience that these representatives will make use of in their work with youth issues in their home countries. Very few countries practice this today on a regular basis, although the experiences of those countries that have youth representatives are positive. The General Assembly has already invited Governments to include youth representatives whenever possible in their national delegations. I will remind all Member States of their responsibility to implement this resolution.

It is my sincere hope, that the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year will not be reduced to a commemoration of the past, but that the opportunity will be used to look forward, and to identify the challenges and potentials of the future.

The President: I now call on the representative of the Philippines, Mrs. Amina Rasul-Bernardo, Presidential Adviser on Youth Affairs and Chairperson of the Philippines National Youth Commission.

Mrs. Rasul-Bernardo (Philippines): We celebrate this year the half-century of existence of an instrument for peace, an institution that was forged in the foundry of human tragedy. It is a celebration that is deserved, for the folly and the risk of a conflagration of the magnitude of the last two global wars have been averted.

The United Nations has done more than this. Not only have fewer young men and women died needlessly in battle, but the co-responsibility of nations in a global community has meant that proportionately fewer have died from communicable diseases. Proportionately fewer have suffered from the blindness of illiteracy. Proportionately fewer have died from hunger and poverty.

Proportionately fewer, yes — but in absolute numbers, more.

The United Nations declared 1985 as International Youth Year in recognition of the difficulties faced by the young owing to the lack of adequate opportunities for education and training, unemployment, juvenile delinquency, drug abuse, poor health facilities and services and lack of participation in the life of society and decision making, among other things.

Today, the world's youth, numbering over a billion people, still cry out for the opportunities to be provided to them, that they may fulfil their rightful roles in society as partners in the development of their nations. Of particular concern to the international community is the

plight of vulnerable and disadvantaged youth — those in areas of conflict, in foreign-occupied or alien-dominated territories, refugee and displaced youth, indigenous youth and those with disabilities; the girl-child.

The populations of the developing countries are becoming younger, while those of the mature economies are ageing rapidly. This reverse demographic trend implies a number of things. One effect will be increased youth migration from the developing to the developed societies in search of opportunities as well as in response to these societies' need for younger blood to fuel their economies. There will also be pressure for equitable access to the world's resources and services and the upgrading, if you will, of the structures and mechanisms for development worldwide.

A global response that will open up greater opportunities for youth in the developing nations is indispensable — not only because this is the morally correct thing to do, but also because it will be ultimately beneficial to the whole human community that it be done.

The other day, our Heads of State and Government adopted a Declaration on the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization. They expressed their resolve to redirect the United Nations to the greater service of humankind, especially to those who are suffering and are deeply deprived. This is the practical and moral challenge of our time. In the words of the Secretary-General, the fiftieth anniversary should provide the occasion to "rekindle the ideals of the Charter", and for the United Nations to reach out to a wider, more global audience, especially young people. In this way, the United Nations will be both strengthened and renewed.

It is with these considerations that we in the group of 77 and China welcome the United Nations Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. This is the logical step to take after the Conferences of Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing. We laud the Beijing Platform of Action for its focus on the girl-child.

We hope that all countries will work conscientiously towards the achievement of the goals of the youth programme. It is imperative that the international community support the programme with a generous commitment to the shared responsibilities implied by this document.

The Philippine Government has been sensitive to the requirements of our youth. First, the Constitution of our Republic clearly enunciates the responsibilities of Government. Thus, it provides that

> "the State recognizes the vital role of youth in nation-building and ... shall encourage their involvement in public and civic affairs".

Secondly, our Constitution explicitly directs the Government to allocate the largest share of the national budget to education.

Thirdly, we have closely involved the young in the institutions of local governance. This is a unique element in the deepening of our democratic culture. We have empowered our youth at every level of local governance. Beginning from the village council, or "barangay", we have organized youth councils composed of elected representatives aged 15 to 21 — unique among Member countries of the United Nations.

Fourthly, we have appointed youth sectoral representatives to our Congress to ensure their full participation in the country's law-making process.

Fifthly, the Philippines has created the National Youth Commission to coordinate all youth-related institutions, policies, programmes and activities of Government and to ensure participation in national development.

Sixthly, the Philippines has adopted a national youth development programme that ensures priority attention to the needs and the concerns of young people.

In all these initiatives since 1985, Government has endeavoured to strengthen the development of a value system anchored in the sanctity of family life, compassion, civility, respect for others and a responsible balance between material affluence and cultural and spiritual enhancement.

The Philippines looks forward to the United Nations Programme of Action on Youth as a larger framework within which we could situate our own initiatives on youth development. Within that framework, broader international cooperation on youth concerns becomes more feasible. We look forward to orchestrated global action to create a human community where our young will no longer be exposed to the needless trials of the flesh and the spirit, but will grow to assume responsible stewardship of our societies and the environment.

We take this opportunity to draw the international community's attention once again to the plight of migrant workers, many of whom are young and are becoming increasingly younger. The youth of this diaspora are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. We therefore urge all countries to speedily ratify the United Nations Convention on Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. We also believe that it is high time that a global conference on migration and development was convened to address this global phenomenon.

At this juncture, the Philippines invites all countries to participate in the upcoming global indigenous and youth cultural olympics, which will be held in Manila from 24 February to 3 March 1996. This project flows from the successful 1993 global youth earth-saving summit held in the Philippines, which developed partnership between indigenous communities and youth for sustainable development.

Our own national hero, Jose P. Rizal, who was martyred very young, wrote "the youth is the hope of the motherland." All Governments recognize this to be true. And yet, youth continues to be marginalized, and in many areas exploited and abused.

All States have a responsibility to mobilize youth's abilities, to sharpen their creativity and inventive genius and to redirect their enthusiasm and hope for the freedom of all peoples from fear, hunger, and injustice. However, it is now an issue with a global dimension, and thus requires a global response.

It has been a decade since the Declaration of the International Youth Year. Yet the problems of youth remain, and are possibly increasing. Worse, access to opportunities and basic services remains as problematic as ever.

We who represent the aspirations of the youth of the world call for the approval of the United Nations Programme of Action for Youth. We call on the international community to provide the necessary resources to implement programmes addressing the needs of the youth of the world.

A young Filipino martyr in the dark days of martial law in the Philippines, one of many who helped break the chain of dictatorship, asked:

> "If we do not care, who will care? If we do not act, who will act? If not now, when?"

I ask the same question today: if not now, when?

The President: I now call on the representative of Barbados, The Honourable Mia Amor Mottley, Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture.

Ms. Mottley (Barbados): First of all, let me express the sadness of the Barbados Government at the passing of Mr. Kenneth Dadzie, who for almost four decades distinguished himself in public service, both for the United Nations and for his own country, Ghana.

It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly at a time when world attention is focused on the significant contribution this body has made over the past 50 years. Let me convey to the United Nations the greetings of the Government and the people of Barbados, as well as congratulations on the attainment of its golden milestone. Fifty years in the cause of world peace has often seemed an elusive and formidable goal, yet as we approach the end of this millennium, a renewed hope stirs our imagination and challenges us to bring into being a new world order based on tolerance, mutual respect and good will.

It is with young people that this challenge must squarely rest, for they will help to shape the structure of that new world order. We live in a world where economic gains are often realized at a tremendous cost to the poor, the marginalized and the socially deprived. Our young people represent our hope for the future, yet public policy often mortgages their future, laying tremendous tax burdens, environmental stress and social fragmentation on their shoulders. The famous African-American poet Gwendolyn Brooks asked in her poem "The Children of the Poor",

> "What shall I give my children who are poor; who are adjudged the leastwise of the land, who are my sweetest lepers; who demand no velvet and no velvety velour ...?"

As we turn our attention to such questions during our observance of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, perhaps we may find the answers that bring hope.

The intervening decade has witnessed mind-boggling changes, ranging from the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the end of communism in Europe to expanded markets and the emergence of major trade blocs, which sometimes threatens the economic viability of small

island developing States. In spite of this activity, many young people remain spectators at a play whose denouement continues to be a mystery. Can we blame them if they remain cynical and adopt an existential stance towards their existence?

A young French mathematician and philosopher by the name of Blaise Pascal summed up this mood best over 300 years ago, when he said,

> "when I consider the short duration of my life, swallowed up in the eternity before and after, the little space I fill, and even can see, engulfed in the infinite immensity of space of which I am ignorant and which knows me not, I am frightened, and am astonished at being here rather than there; why now rather than then?"

This echoes the comments of the speaker who preceded me, the Chairperson of the National Youth Commission of the Government of the Philippines.

Our task must be to steer our young people away from the nothingness of this void. It is therefore fitting and timely that the World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 contains measures which, if implemented by Governments, should redound to the benefit of young people everywhere. The Programme focuses on providing new opportunities for young people, integrating youth-related concerns and national development policies and plans, protecting young people from harmful drugs and addictive substances, fostering racial and religious tolerance, mutual respect and understanding among young people and, most important of all, dealing with the question of employment opportunities for young people.

The Government of Barbados, like those of other Member States, subscribes to these principles and has endorsed them in its national youth policies. Barbados also recognizes that if young people are to participate fully in the socio-economic life of our society, they must be given opportunities for educational attainment commensurate with their aspirations. Hence our belief in ensuring that children at the primary and secondary levels have 100 per cent access. They must also be allowed access to employment opportunities, or self-employment, and training must be provided, whether in particular skills or in business opportunities.

Many States Members of the United Nations are newly independent countries, having gained independence in the last 30 years. The challenge for the former colonies is to forge a path that is culturally relevant and developmentally sustainable and to place strong emphasis on that cadre of young people who hold the key to national identity and prosperity. Young people demand change. We must be the architects and craftsmen of that change.

I therefore welcome the themes identified some 10 years ago by the General Assembly for International Youth Year: participation, development and peace. Today they will serve as a worthwhile model for integrated action at all levels. This should serve to address more effectively the problems experienced by young people in society. I therefore applaud the broad and diverse inputs from other international instruments into the Programme of Action.

The Government of Barbados realizes that the challenge of meeting these themes can be met only through a scientific and participatory approach to youth policy and youth development: scientific, because resources are scarce and we must therefore maximize the benefits to be gained from our programmes and not simply shoot into the air; and participatory, because that is the only way we can reach the young people.

For young people, Governments are often faceless bureaucracies producing many words and little action that has a direct impact on them. We in Barbados believe that if we are to succeed in reaching those people who are marginalized, we must first put a face on government. As one of our primary programmes, we have therefore identified a system of appointing a number of Youth Commissioners responsible for motivating, counselling, mobilizing and channelling 80,000 young people at the ground level into programmes already provided by government in all areas of social and economic activity. They are the eyes, ears, hands and feet of government, because at the end of the day we must be able to say to those young people that here is someone whom you can trust and on whom you can rely.

In addition, there is a Youth Entrepreneurship programme directed at young people who want to pursue self-employment and entrepreneurial activity. Through this programme, we are now offering technical and financial assistance and are developing a mentor programme that will give those young people the opportunity to consult closely and work with established business persons in the private sector. The ultimate objective of this programme is to create confidence

among young entrepreneurs, because if they fail they will not return to the life of business.

The Barbados Youth Service represents yet another attempt to reach those young people by providing a framework of character building and discipline while still providing skills to encourage their personal development and growth. These youth programmes are buttressed by extensive training programmes in the formal and non-formal education sector and, indeed, through interaction with other social service agencies. Such programmes, we believe, provide for the rekindling of hope, the building of trust and the development of confidence among young people. At the end of the day, if you do not talk to them and relate to them in a language and a style that they understand, they will remain outcasts in their own country.

We believe that no single programme will ever succeed in meeting this challenge fully. Our responsibility as Governments therefore must be to create an environment in which both governmental and non-governmental organizations can create a safety net that is wide enough to catch the diverse needs and interests of young people.

As difficult as the battle is for Governments, I daresay that the real struggle lies within that individual young man or young woman. Let the words of a beloved young Barbadian artist, Edwin Yearwood, who is an icon for young Caribbean people, stand as an inspiration to each one of those young persons:

> "A voice in my head keeps telling me the road is long
> It tells me we must be strong,
> It tells me we must go on.
> Today is the start of the rest of my life".

This time, perhaps, we will all hear that voice.

The President: I now call on the representative of Latvia, Ms. Linda Jākobsone, Youth Representative.

Ms. Jākobsone (Latvia): As this is the first time that a youth representative from Latvia has addressed the General Assembly, I should like to express my appreciation for this honour, especially on such an occasion as the special commemorative meeting to mark the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. Following the adoption at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly of resolutions 49/152 and 49/154, the Latvian Government decided to include a youth representative in its official delegation to this session of the General Assembly. It is a great honour and pleasure for me to represent Latvia here.

I should like to address the General Assembly on a topic that is quite timely for the United Nations: tolerance. This is the United Nations Year for Tolerance. Tolerance is something that we all need in our everyday lives, something that makes our personalities free and allows us to be independent in our understanding of the world. In this context, I should like to address the issue of tolerance from the perspective of youth.

I am 19 years old. This means that I am no longer a child. I am no longer a schoolgirl who plays with her dolls in the playground. I am old enough to make decisions on my own: vote, get married, travel on my own. I am responsible for myself, but not for the things that are happening all around the world. However, there are things I can influence to make my life, and other people's lives, better.

But what do we understand by the word "better"? For each person, it has a different meaning, based on our individual values rather than on our colour, age, gender, religion, language, culture or nationality. Tolerance begins by listening to different opinions and by trying to understand where they come from.

There is a popular drawing that depicts children holding hands around the globe. It shows that children do not see the differences in colour, gender or nationality, but accept everyone. The differences begin to grow only as children become older. We should learn a lesson from the very young and treat other persons as individuals first, leaving their superficial differences in second place. We have to treat the world in which we live as the best, and only, world we have. We should try to unite the world, not drive it apart. We have to accept that there is enough space in the world for everybody, and that there will continue to be, if we stand for peace — peace between nature and human beings, among nations, countries, peoples, neighbours, relatives and families. Peace can be reached only through tolerance. But who is thinking of tolerance now, and who will bring it to the world? I think that we cannot wait for future generations to bring peace; we have to act now.

The future belongs to youth. The young have always had the task of breaking with the old and bringing in new ways. While this has not always worked, we should at least try. Youth are the next politicians, business people, parents, teachers, scientists, writers and presidents. They

will determine the course of the years to come. Those of us who are still quite young are already thinking about what sort of world we are going to live in, have our families in, bring up our children in.

The world is getting more complicated every day: new machines, computers, guns, chemicals. In many parts of the world, the standard of living is getting higher, but is life really getting better? I am not certain that it is. The world is getting more polluted and more dangerous; wars are still being waged. Why? If people are getting cleverer every day, why do they not understand each other?

I believe that it is our nature to take. We have to learn how to give. Tolerance grows only through education. It is very important to understand this so that we may change the circumstances in which we live. The legacy of our parents was that of a different world, a world governed by the cold war, and we cannot blame them for it. But we must be aware of what we need to learn to change the world. The education we need to truly become tolerant is not just what our parents and teachers can give; it includes meeting people, travelling, participating in cultural and educational exchanges. We do not have to agree with the thinking of everyone we encounter. We just have to try to accept that people do not always think alike.

One of the routes to tolerance is through the campaign "All different — all equal". It is essential to accept others as they are, without trying to change them, because we can live only our own lives, nobody else's. But there are limits to tolerance. There is a narrow line between interfering — most likely in a well-meaning way — and tolerance. Which is the most honest way? The answer lies within each of us. We have to listen to our hearts.

The United Nations is a place where people from around the world can meet and share their views. For now, it is like a card game. If we want to win, we do not show other players our cards. And if we show our cards, we do so only if we are sure that the other player is on our side. We do not lay down all our cards together, because there is always a possibility that someone is keeping something up their sleeve, and then the others lose. What are we playing for? For nothing less than our future.

I understand that people are not always good, with pure intentions, though I wish I could think so. Nevertheless, what if we take the risk of showing our cards and discover that people are the same everywhere — the same living, breathing human beings, people who are basically good despite their flaws? While we probably will not be ready for such a step in this millennium, I would like to think that the third millennium will be the one in which we achieve understanding.

I think the role of youth in this process is so important because we are old enough to know the rules, yet brave — or inexperienced — enough not to follow them. Let us change something in our lives every day, starting with small steps, thinking about our actions, giving someone an unexpected smile from the heart, saying — or withholding — the one word that can change someone's day. We need children's and youth assemblies to unite people from around the globe. Such assemblies would serve to share and dream about what is best in the world instead of worrying about the problems in our countries.

I think that small things are so important in our lives; sometimes a favourite book, a friend, family, or even a flower on a different planet — as in Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* — can be more important to our world than economics and politics.

This is the understanding we need to bring peace and tolerance to our planet.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands, Ms. Hilde Laffeber, Elected Representative of Youth.

Ms. Laffeber (Netherlands): I am very happy to be given the opportunity to speak here today as a representative of the Netherlands and as a representative of the youth of my country on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. The question is: will this anniversary be a real celebration or just another commemoration?

The themes of International Youth Year were participation, development and peace. These were also the themes that dominated the guidelines and programmes involving youth adopted at a session of the General Assembly similar to this one, in 1985. Participation, development and peace were also the themes that were supposed to be central to the situation of youth in the 10 years between these meetings. Supposed to be, because — although there is no official evaluation of the most recent years of national and international policies involving youth at our disposal — these goals have certainly not yet been fulfilled. As regards participation, this cannot be underlined more clearly than by the relatively small number of youth delegates present here.

In 1985, 50 countries accredited young people to address the issue of "Youth". This year, only about 10 countries have done so. In the other areas also, the goals of International Youth Year are far from having been achieved.

As you know, the cold war has ended, and therefore the original incentive of putting the theme of peace so prominently on the agenda of youth policy has disappeared. But new wars are being fought, which disrupt the lives of young people in a number of countries and create ever-increasing flows of refugees. This is not only a problem for the young people themselves; it is also a problem for their societies as a whole.

For example, in refugee camps, children up to the age of 16 are generally offered some form of education. Their parents, mostly women, receive guidance in coping with their new situation and are involved in many activities. Youth, however, have hardly anything to do in these refugee camps. It is not surprising that this continued inactivity sometimes leads to situations in which they form gangs and get involved in criminal activities.

With this attitude, and without education, how can these young people be the ones who will lead their countries into a new future? Why not try to incorporate youth in education and other programmes in the camps to make them invest their energy in a positive way, involving them in the medical and other social services, or putting them in charge of the security of the camps? Creative ideas to improve the life of young refugees are missing in the draft World Programme of Action for Youth as it stands now. I do hope this idea will be put on the agenda of the ongoing discussion on youth in the coming years.

Young people are clearly underrepresented in the field of social and economic development. A great number of young people are unemployed. Youth unemployment can be seen as the main reason for the social marginalization of youth, wherever they live. They enter a vicious circle of marginalization, underemployment and delinquency, for which they are then held responsible.

This is especially true for young migrants. They are often discriminated against and resented in their new countries or new home towns. Society tends to treat them either as victims or as criminals. But they are not to blame for every crime or for the lack of jobs. It is the role of Governments to take up this issue and try to change the situation for and with youth.

The issue of environment and development was barely addressed in 1985, but it is of crucial importance to the youth of today. Governments still seem to overlook the key role young people can and should play in the field of environmental development. Young people, not only in my country but also around the world, are very concerned about the vulnerability of their environment. More than the older generations, today's youth are taking action in the field of environment, varying from very practical acts — something as simple as cleaning up litter in public parks — to more elaborate programmes. An example of the latter is the partnership that the Commission for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Development Programme have developed with three major international non-governmental youth organizations dealing with environmental questions, to set up a large information system for youth on Agenda 21. It has also been decided to celebrate a youth day during the Commission's session in 1996. These are exactly the kinds of projects that can and should be set up when implementing the paragraph on the environment of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth, as they create a partnership for action between established institutions and youth.

With regard to International Youth Year: Participation, Development and Peace, I think the two latter themes of the Year make sense only if the first goal has been fulfilled. In other words, is it not just as strange to have a celebration of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year without youth as it would be to have a Women's Conference without women?

Consider the following. Youth constitute approximately one fifth of the world's population. Youth have first-hand information on how they want their lives to be and how their lives are. Youth want to make a positive contribution to the discussions on youth-related issues at the international level. Youth are key agents in social development and change. Participation of youth brings with it a lot of responsibilities, with which we are willing to deal but first of all, participation of young people is a right. However, Governments are the ones who can make the choice on whether they will take participation of young people seriously.

Since 1985, and even before that year, several resolutions have been adopted by this very General Assembly in which Member States are invited:

> "whenever possible, to include youth representatives in their national delegations to the General

Assembly and other relevant United Nations meetings" (*resolution 47/85, para. 11*).

This invitation found a wide response at the Women's Conference in Beijing, where over 80 young people were included in the official delegations. Unfortunately, only a few Member States have included youth representatives in their delegations to this General Assembly.

Youth are defined in the United Nations as women and men from 15 to 24 years of age. Youth representatives to the General Assembly are young people in national delegations, often elected through a national youth council or another non-governmental organization platform of youth, and accredited as advisers by their foreign offices. It is, of course, a very specific instrument for strengthening the participation of youth, but it is the one I have most experience with. I have participated as a member of the Netherlands delegation in the informal consultations of the Economic and Social Council, in the Third Committee, which deals with youth within its social affairs agenda, and now in this plenary session on youth. I consider this instrument to be a very important one. A good way to be acknowledged as a full participant — although I am only 19 — by 40-year-old members of other delegations in the discussions is to be able to speak at the same level as they do, as a delegate or a representative of my country.

I hope you will consider having a youth delegate in your delegation next year, when once again a substantial resolution on youth will be drafted and adopted. But instead of a resolution on youth, why not try to make it a resolution by youth?

This would certainly be an improvement compared to the situation concerning the draft World Programme of Action for Youth, which, hopefully, we will be adopting tomorrow. This has been in the drafting stage for several years, but only very few young people and youth organizations have had the chance to influence the draft Programme. The enormous negative influence this has had on the draft Programme was very obvious during the extensive informal consultations of the Economic and Social Council, earlier this month and during yesterday's formal meeting of the Council. Here was a group of diplomats, with long experience in life, attempting to improve the text of the draft document. It was a very frustrating process for a young person. Not that these diplomats were incapable or unwilling. But young people were a very small minority in these consultations: only Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands had youth representatives present there; there were none from other regions of the world. There were not enough of us to convey the concern of youth on how youth would like to improve its own situation and on the positive contribution it can make. So basic information on these issues was also lacking.

This example indicates clearly that in the implementation of the draft Programme, it is an absolute necessity to include participation of youth at all levels and at all stages of the process. At the international level, an excellent opportunity for youth to meet, exchange ideas and provide the United Nations system, as well as young people all over the world, with direct information on programmes involving youth is the Youth Forum of the United Nations system. This Youth Forum was established in 1991 and is first of all a platform for national, regional and international youth organizations. Also, cooperation between the Forum and the United Nations organizations most involved in youth issues is very strong. The main objectives of this Forum are to strengthen youth efforts in the field of youth participation, to establish more effective and efficient channels of communication between and among youth and youth-serving organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, and to promote the implementation and monitoring of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth. The second meeting of this Forum will be held in 1996, and I hope it will prove to be a major factor contributing to the implementation of the World Programme.

I would conclude that, after a decade of international youth policy, we are still far from achieving the goals of International Youth Year: participation, development and peace. So I cannot really consider this anniversary a celebration. It should not, however, be concluded that international youth policy has failed altogether. In fact, in 1995, the new aims of youth policy, as set out in the draft World Programme of Action for Youth, are certainly worth pursuing. But they can be usefully pursued only if there is international backing and genuine support from all quarters, with no hypocrisy or hidden agendas, and with the active and full participation of young people at all levels.

Youth are not the problem: we are the solution.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Turkey, Mr. Çelem.

Mr. Çelem (Turkey): Fifteen years ago, in 1979, the General Assembly designated 1985 as International

Youth Year. The themes of the Year were participation, development and peace. In 1985, the General Assembly also endorsed guidelines for producing specific measures addressing the needs of young people. These guidelines have assisted us in formulating plans for the well-being of young people in our countries over the past 10 years.

Ten years should not be considered a long time. However, in the last decade, our world has entered a process of rapid political, economic and socio-cultural change, which still continues and which affects us all. Youth is both benefiting from and falling victim to these drastic changes. As experienced in parts of Europe and Asia, the end of the cold war opened up new horizons and created new opportunities for young people to improve their skills and to participate in the development and transformation efforts of their countries. On the other hand, as in Bosnia and the Caucasus, armed conflicts brought about by these changes forced young people to set aside their hopes for the future and to take up weapons instead of taking up books, pens or computers. Instead of peace, tolerance and progress, they had to set their minds on methods to defend their independence and their dignity against aggressors who are inclined to perpetrate crimes of genocidal magnitude.

Societies' expectations of young people differ according to the level of development of a country. Some see young people as a key element in the existing development process; others expect youth to be a stimulating force for social transformation. In meeting the challenge of creating a society for all, young people occupy an important place with their unique characteristics. Young people in all countries are the guarantee of the future and of the renewal of generations. Their vision, their ideals and their energies are major sources of sustainable development. They all deserve a healthy environment, both physically and mentally, to develop their skills and contribute to the achievements of the societies they live in, in accordance with our expectations.

In this respect, the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (E/1995/123 and Corr.1) is a well prepared document. It points out major areas of problems that are contributing to the marginalization of young people, and draws a framework of universal standards of action to be applied by national, regional and international bodies to address these problem areas. I would like to thank and congratulate all those who have spent time and effort on preparing this document. If approved, the document will eventually become one of the most important achievements of the international community, which has in the last decade concentrated on addressing key dimensions of social progress.

The world population between the ages of 15 and 24 is estimated to be over one billion, representing 18 per cent of the total world population. Eighty-four per cent of that young population lives in developing countries, and in the future that ratio will increase. Implementation of the draft World Programme of Action when adopted, will therefore become a major question in the development efforts of those countries, and will bring the issue of regional and international cooperation to the forefront. Taking into account the fact that a great majority of young people live in countries with very limited resources, great responsibilities fall on the shoulders of regional and international bodies to assist developing countries in their research, policy studies, planning and coordination programmes relating to youth issues.

Turkey strongly supports the draft World Programme of Action for Youth, as it puts forward areas of priority and draws up the framework for global solutions.

Issues concerning youth entered onto the Turkish agenda for development following the establishment of the Republic in 1923. After having lost almost an entire generation of youth during the First World War and the War of Independence, to rear a new generation and to focus their attention on the development of the country became the most important goals of successive Governments. They activated all available resources, and in a short time a well educated, dedicated generation of males and females, in urban and rural areas, joined the drive for the development of my country.

For 70 years Turkey has been annually celebrating one day in its calendar as a children's holiday, and one day as a youth holiday. Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, in an address to Turkish youth, gave them the responsibility of defending and promoting the ideas and ideals of the Republic, encouraging them to participate fully, effectively and constructively in the development of the country. Last June, Turkey changed some articles of its Constitution, lowering the age limit to allow younger people to take an active part in the political life of the country.

Young people in Turkey constitute 21 per cent of the whole population. Issues related to youth have always been included in the priority areas of Government

programmes. In fact, our national plans and programmes addressing youth issues have benefited greatly from United Nations themes and guidelines elaborated for this purpose.

Changes that are taking place in the world have repercussions for Turkish society. As one of the vulnerable sections of society, young people are sometimes positively affected by changes, such as the development of information technologies, and sometimes adversely affected, as in the case of the massive migration to metropolitan areas in search of a better future.

Official, private and voluntary organizations are active in Turkey to provide a healthy environment for young people so that they can develop their skills or learn new ones. Health services are provided to young people either free of charge or at a symbolic cost. The challenge confronting Turkish institutions is to extend youth services to all parts of the country as rapidly as possible and, at the same time, continue to improve them.

In Turkey, programmes addressing youth-related issues are designed to foster tolerance, respect and understanding among young females and males, without discrimination.

We cannot remain satisfied with what has been achieved up to now. In meeting the needs of young people, and in providing them with the necessary services to ensure health, development, training and happiness, there is always ground for improvement. The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, once adopted, will undoubtedly be a very useful guide in our national efforts, as well as in the efforts of the international community as a whole.

The President: I now call on the representative of Japan.

Ms. Horiuchi (Japan): Just two days ago, Heads of State and Government assembled in this General Assembly Hall to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and to express their commitment to the creation of a better world for tomorrow. They addressed the question of how to shape that future the better to serve the needs of people everywhere, and at the conclusion of the series of meetings they adopted a Declaration embodying their common views on this subject.

Today, we gather to discuss the issue of youth. It is young people who in the future will act on the hopes and aspirations of humankind. In our view, it is therefore appropriate that we should now be taking part in this special meeting to commemorate the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year.

It is true, as is stated in the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, that:

> "Young people represent agents, beneficiaries and victims of major societal changes and are generally confronted by a paradox: to seek to be integrated into an existing order or to serve as a force to transform that order." (*E/1995/123, para. 2*).

It is for this reason that serious consideration must be given to the issues that confront young people and to the concerns that occupy them.

Some progress has been made in enhancing the well-being of people around the world. However, the profound transformation that the international community has undergone in the last few years has increased political and social instability to some extent. While the cold war has ended, the world continues to be plagued by, for example, recurrent regional conflict. Young people today live in conditions of considerable uncertainty. Yet there is hope that conditions will improve in the next millennium.

At the important World Conference on Women held last month in Beijing, and throughout the regional preparatory meetings, emphasis was placed on young women and girls as important agents of change, but also as persons unable fully to enjoy equal rights, and a special effort was made to promote their participation. In part as a result, problems such as underdevelopment, unemployment, HIV/AIDS, street children and adolescents were identified, and concern was expressed about the rapid spread of information technology and consumerism, as well as about the need to promote peace. To attack the injustices that women and girls confront, the Conference adopted a Programme of Action. It remains for us to translate the words of that Programme into action.

I should like now to turn to some of the issues facing Japan. A recent survey conducted by my Government reveals a certain mental and physical weakness that Japanese young people have developed as a result of growing up in an affluent society. Accordingly, my Government's central concern with respect to young people is to foster in them the mental

and physical strength that they will require to shoulder the challenges of the twenty-first century.

To that end, Japan has established and developed what it refers to as friendship networks. In 1985, for example, in commemoration of International Youth Year, the Government launched the International Youth Village Programme, which brings Japanese and foreign youth together every year to learn about each other and to engage in a variety of educational activities. This year, 600 young people visited the International Village for a week — twice as many as in 1985, the first year of its operation. Japan also conducts several international youth exchange programmes — for example, the Ship for World Youth, the Ship for South East Asian Youth, the International Youth Development Exchange Programme and exchanges with Korea and China. Furthermore, 2,000 Japanese young people are currently in developing countries as Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, contributing their skills and energies to the efforts those countries are making to promote development.

I should like to take this opportunity to touch upon an initiative that Japan has taken recently. On the occasion of the historic fiftieth anniversary of the end of the War, my Government launched a project called the Peace, Friendship and Exchange Initiative, the aim of which is to build future-oriented relations with our Asian neighbours and other countries by confronting the past squarely and promoting mutual understanding. The Initiative includes several youth exchange programmes and student-abroad exchanges which aim to promote mutual understanding among members of the younger generation. For example, every year approximately 130 young people are invited to participate in an Asian and Pacific Youth Forum.

While almost half a century has passed since the end of the War, a vast majority of people today did not experience it. In order to make sure that the horrors that occurred never occur again, we must not forget what took place. In this time of peace and abundance, it is all the more essential that we reflect on past errors, convey to future generations the violence and brutality of war and the many lives that were lost, and work resolutely for lasting peace.

The Government of Japan has long been aware of the multidisciplinary nature of the issue of youth. In 1949, after the War, an advisory council was established to ensure that the views of citizens were reflected in governmental policy. And in 1966 the Youth Bureau, subsequently reorganized as the Youth Affairs Administration, was created within the Prime Minister's Office to maintain coordination among the government ministries concerned and to implement measures relating to youth, in particular, international exchange programmes. The Government of Japan is of the view that it is essential to have a coordinating body of this kind to monitor and review overall policies and programmes relating to youth.

Our efforts to follow up International Youth Year resulted in 1989 in the formulation of a national plan of action, which was then revised in 1994. The plan addressed the issues of education, employment, juvenile delinquency, personal development and the family, and called for public information campaigns and research studies to be carried out. Ratification by Japan of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is helping to integrate our policies on youth, and we intend to further promote such policies and programmes, taking into consideration the outcomes of recent international conferences such as those held in Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, and Beijing.

Finally, I would like to reiterate that as partners and agents as well as beneficiaries of social development, young people are the key to building a better world. Government, non-governmental organizations and the international community must therefore work together on their behalf.

I would like to conclude by saying that while it is youth, the next generation, who hold the future in their hands, it is we, the Governments of the world, that are responsible for their well-being today. Our success today will help to determine their success tomorrow. Accordingly, the Government of Japan would like to affirm its renewed commitment to promoting respect for the rights, and to realize the potential, of young people everywhere.

The President: I now call on the Permanent Representative of Indonesia, Mr. Wisnumurti.

Mr. Wisnumurti (Indonesia): It is an honour for me to deliver this statement today on behalf of the Indonesian Minister of Education and Culture, Professor Dr. Wardiman Djojonegoro, who, due to unforeseen events, is unable to attend this meeting of the General Assembly dedicated to youth throughout the world.

This session has a special meaning for Indonesia. A relatively young nation, this year we are celebrating 50

years of independence. And, it was the young people of Indonesia who took centre stage in our drive towards independence and in charting a successful course for the country over the past five decades. Indeed, in 1928 it was young Indonesians from all over the archipelago who initiated the nationalist movement, ultimately leading to our Proclamation of Independence in 1945. Their effort is commemorated each year on 28 October, which is observed as Youth Oath Day.

Accordingly, the Indonesian delegation is most pleased to participate in these proceedings, which mark the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. On behalf of the Indonesian Government, I would therefore like to take this opportunity to renew Indonesia's fundamental commitment to concerted action on behalf of youth throughout the world.

There is a well-known saying that "One who possesses youth possesses the future". These words of wisdom carry a very important message for all of us. If we, as sovereign nations, want to create a world of peace and prosperity for all, then we must care for and nurture our young generation, imbue them with a sense of responsibility, and provide them with the necessary skills to meet future challenges.

At the present time, however, there are numerous problems that must be addressed. The population between the ages of 15 and 30 has more than doubled over the last 50 years, by far the largest increase occurring in the developing countries. For some, this has presented tremendous burdens. For many, it has limited the resources available to youth and for development programmes that offer hope and opportunity. Increasing population growth rates have been a contributing factor in the widening gap between the developed and developing countries, and between the rich and poor. At times, this has resulted in a marginalization of young people, creating the feeling — and frequently the reality — that they are disenfranchised.

Also, while we all hail the benefits of growth, development and industrialization with the potential for socio-economic progress, we recognize that uneven patterns of development can contribute to harmful patterns of migration. The migration of youth from rural to urban areas, and even across national boundaries, in search of employment and a better life does not always meet with success. For many young people, it is a rude awakening to discover that development may in fact pass them over, leaving behind a generation that is disillusioned and alienated, for whom it is too difficult to imagine that they do represent the future.

Too often, our actions do not match our words. When the international community professes stewardship and wise use of natural resources, and of the environment, the reality is frequently better characterized as depletion of precious assets — assets that directly affect the livelihood of future generations. We too often fail to recognize that the harmful practices of today create a shameful legacy for our youth, who are left to correct problems which were not of their own doing.

Where in the past our societies found sustenance and resilience in cultural values passed on from generation to generation, the current era of globalization seriously threatens established orders, causing a widening schism between old and new. Without strong values and a sense of identity, only confusion rises to the surface. And within such an environment, it is not surprising that drug abuse, crime and unacceptable lifestyles — sexual or otherwise — are on the rise.

Against this background, it is gratifying to note that this session of the General Assembly will deliberate on the draft World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Although the Indonesian delegation has recommendations that we feel would improve the current text prior to adoption, we fully endorse it as an important first step on the way to creating a better future for all.

We must recognize, however, that this is only the first step. Much more needs to be accomplished, and the United Nations is the only body capable of undertaking the necessary activities. This Organization, and all of its specialized agencies, should therefore vigorously review the current conditions of youth throughout the world. At the same time, while we acknowledge the fundamental importance of the United Nations as the best forum to redress inequities with respect to youth, we as individual nations must all work to support that effort.

In Indonesia, we take this responsibility very seriously. From the beginning, young Indonesians have consistently taken an active part in the nation's development. At present, 31 youth organizations, combined in one National Commission for Indonesian Youth and representing various religious and political persuasions, actively participate in parliamentary discussions.

In that regard, our People's Consultative Assembly has directed the Government to plan and initiate youth programmes aimed at preparing the future generation, including national leaders — a generation which should be disciplined, responsive and self-reliant, and with a high work ethos. Most important, youth development in Indonesia is directed towards strengthening young people so that they will be capable of facing the challenges associated with Indonesia's continued development. In this respect, the focus is on imparting to the young a sense of responsibility to become pioneers of Indonesia's future development, similar to their fathers before them who fought for independence.

Our programmatic approach, which is elaborated in a country paper, goes across sectors, with intersectoral solutions. It addresses such areas as education, employment, hunger and poverty, health, environment, drug abuse, juvenile delinquency and provisions for constructive leisure time activities. Our approach is also holistic, thus acknowledging that the education of youth must be paired with opportunities for advancement and employment, while giving them a sense of pride in country and compassion for all humankind. In short, our efforts are focused on preparing our youth to compete in a global environment, and on strengthening their own unique identity as Indonesians. We believe that this will strengthen the resilience of Indonesian youth to face the future with confidence.

Indonesia's efforts to date, including those within the framework of the Non-Aligned Movement, have convinced us that we can and must contribute to the resolution of the problems confronted by the youth in Indonesia and throughout the world. Ultimate resolution of those problems will undoubtedly require the most intense cooperation by all of us.

We should direct our efforts towards gaining insight into programmes and proposals that are helpful to individual nations, and that are appropriate to specific situations and conditions. Through our deliberations, we can learn how to solve our common problems, utilizing the United Nations and its specialized agencies as a medium for progress. Finally, our cooperation should be directed towards developing better monitoring mechanisms and preventing the occurrence of youth problems all over the world, now and in the future. It is my sincere hope that the current session of the General Assembly will strengthen such cooperation, for the benefit of all youth.

The President: I now call on Mr. Zaid Abdul-Aleem, Student Delegate of the United States of America.

Mr. Abdul-Aleem (United States of America): I am very proud and pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on the theme of youth in the global context. As an African-American citizen of the United States from a major metropolitan area — Chicago — a Fulbright Scholar in El Salvador and Brazil, and a Muslim, I bring a perspective on youth in both developed and developing counties that can lend a unique voice to these discussions.

While I have this opportunity to speak here today, I think of many individuals whose opinions and ideas are not recognized, including youth. While globalization can be productive, it can also be very destructive in its effect on certain sectors of the global society if people are not included, if their voices are not heard, and if their ideas not incorporated into policies.

Mr. Abibi (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Governments around the world, including my own, have officially recognized the need to consult with and work with those individuals, including youth, for whom commitments were made in the programmes of action resulting from recent international conferences — such as the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women. However, these commitments must become reality. For this, the voices of youth, as well as others, must be heard.

In preparation for this meeting, I asked a variety people in the United States and Brazil what they thought the role of youth should be in globalization. The answers were generally as follows: "Globalization? What is that?" "Globalization? Yeah, I know what that is. That's something for the first world. It can't help us in the third world." "Globalization? I don't know what that is, but children today need better access to education." And, "Globalization? I don't know what that is, but my Government needs to listen to all leaders in my society, not just the rich and powerful."

We recognize that these responses articulate the issues that the global community must address. And I know that there are a lot of people including those here in the United Nations and elsewhere in the world who are busy trying to answer these questions. However, I cannot reiterate enough the importance of listening to the voices of youth and paying attention to the solutions they

propose. But, how do we prepare youth so that they — we — have the confidence to make our voices heard?

An exceptional few might make it but the majority of youth must be nurtured. As long as I can remember, I was told that I could do anything I wanted to do. I heard that message at home, in school and in the community. Young people around the world need to hear the same message on a regular basis. They should be free from discrimination due to race, class, caste or gender. They must be sufficiently free to dream and to believe that those dreams can become a reality.

However, having a dream does not make it come true. Through the material and spiritual support of my family, the positive influence of friends and support groups in the community, and a culturally enriching education, I was able to develop the pride, confidence and critical thinking skills that would later create opportunities for me. For only if they are provided a supportive environment in the home, community and school will children develop into youth who can recognize and create opportunities for themselves.

Investment in the family, investment in the community and investment in education must be addressed locally, nationally and globally. By providing youth with opportunities to cultivate their assets, develop their skills and their environment, and become confident in themselves, future generations will see a true global community representing all voices. Imagine the ills of racism, discrimination, sexism and ethnic conflict meeting head-on with masses of educated, well-informed, culturally rich and confident citizens. And imagine globalization proving to be more than just a political buzzword without a definition that prompts creative action.

While much work remains to be done to achieve our domestic as well as our international commitments for domestic social development, the United States has designed an array of activities to empower students as citizens and to ensure the safe passage of youth through the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. Examples include comprehensive services to reduce teenage pregnancy; the President's tobacco initiative to reduce smoking by children and adolescents by 50 per cent in the next seven years; community schools to forge partnerships at the community level and provide a place for youth to go after school and on weekends; enterprise communities where private and public institutions will collaborate to revitalize communities by improving job opportunities, housing, transportation and services; and a variety of programmes designed to address drug and alcohol abuse and substance abuse-related violence.

Most importantly, youth will be included in implementing these programmes in their own communities.

The promise of education continues to be a major focus of efforts to empower our citizens. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act of 1994 supports grass-roots efforts to help schoolchildren meet high standards for achievement and discipline. School-to-work programmes are uniting businesses, community colleges, and high schools to provide work-study experience and technical expertise.

In the past, young people did not routinely participate in developing their own educational plans. Now the Act mandates that students be invited to participate in developing, revising and reviewing their plans to ensure that their preferences and interests are considered. These programmes demonstrate the importance the United States Government places on investment in the family, community and education. However, they do not pretend to solve all our problems. Little will be accomplished unless young men and young women see the value of the programmes, have access to them, and take ownership of them. Nevertheless, programmes such as these might serve as useful models for confronting similar problems in other countries. In turn, programmes in other countries can undoubtedly enrich my country. While these models are a good start, they are nothing without proper implementation.

Whatever the appropriate model, we must move forward together with solutions. In doing so we should recall that, while youth may be the principal beneficiaries of programmes to strengthen the home, community, and school, youth can also contribute to the design and implementation of those solutions. We must make it possible for the voices of youth to be heard. We must also, as youth, demand of ourselves that we take the initiative to be involved. With our voices, we can provide part of the answer. We will be part of the solution.

The Acting President *(interpretation from French):* I now call on the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea, Mr. Park Soo Gil.

Mr. Park Soo Gil (Republic of Korea): I should first like to commend the fiftieth anniversary secretariat and, in particular the Youth Task Force, for their preparations for the tenth anniversary of International

Youth Year and their support for youth-related events and activities.

The celebration of the capability and positive contributions of youth worldwide culminates this year in the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year. In recognition of the fact that the young men and women who are the dreamers of today will be the decision-makers of tomorrow, the decade-long observance of International Youth Year has progressively contributed to the formulation of more focused and effective global youth policies.

In order to continue to prepare for the time when one generation passes the baton of leadership to the next, I believe that it would be useful for broad channels of intergenerational communication to be established. This would help promote dialogue on the issues and concerns that affect today's youth and the challenges that await them as a collective generation.

With the world youth population currently at approximately 1.03 billion, the majority of whom reside in developing countries, it is critical to position youth policies and programmes as an integral part of all development goals. Indeed, it is only through a "holistic social approach", which envisions long-term solutions and a comprehensive strategy, that the international community can begin truly to address the problems that threaten the well-being of youth and hamper their full potential as a positive force in society. In this regard, both the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, held this year, presented a timely and important opportunity for us to address the significance of youth in development.

In the light of the disturbing fact that children and young people are the primary victims of poverty and conflict in developing countries, it is clear that special focus must be given to them in our social development efforts. Another key element in our approach should be the pursuit of equal rights for women, by eliminating discrimination at an early age, expanding their opportunities in all areas, including education and health care, and elevating self-worth in society. The Republic of Korea wishes to see the World Youth Programme of Action to the Year 2000 and Beyond adopted by consensus during this plenary session. Among the priority areas suggested by the draft Programme of Action, the eradication of hunger and of absolute poverty are two of the most pressing issues at hand. As basic rights which should be afforded to any human being, it is crucial that the international community make the utmost effort to cooperate in resolving these problems.

Another critical area which requires concerted international cooperation is long-term human resources development. The decade-long experience of my own country's development process has proved that the education and training of young people is the key to success. Therefore, my delegation would like to stress the importance of improving the level of basic education, developing a wide array of vocational skills and raising literacy among youth.

Although global youth clearly represents a diverse population, coming from different cultures and varying socio-economic backgrounds, there are some problems which they commonly share. Among the most impending dangers are drug abuse, criminal activities and the growing peril of intolerance, which the international community must strive to overcome as threats to the well-being of its young members.

In the Republic of Korea, we have established a comprehensive long-term plan for youth entitled the 1992-2001 Basic Plan for the Youth of Korea, which has now been incorporated into the seventh and eighth half-decade Socioeconomic Development Plan. Moreover, in order to ensure the effective implementation of this programme, the Korean Government enacted a Basic Law on Youth in December 1992, which was designated as National Year for Youth. That same year, the Youth Development Committee was established under the auspices of the Prime Minister. We also currently sponsor annual exchange activities with seven Asian countries. By the year 2000, a Youth International Exchange Centre will be established for the administration of various international activities of young people.

Commemorating the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year and recognizing the vast potential of youth all over the world, my Government hosted the World Youth Leaders' Conference in Seoul in May 1995, which was organized by the International Association of University Presidents and the Korean Institute for Youth Development, with the participation of the United Nations.

The Conference was attended by students, scholars and academic leaders from 64 countries, as well as representatives of the United Nations. The Conference, whose theme was "What Should We Prepare for the

Twenty-first Century?" was a forum for the participants to reflect upon contemporary youth culture and to define the role and responsibility of the new generation in the age of globalization. The Conference provided these young people with a valuable opportunity to voice their concerns and share their visions with the older generation. The outcome of the Conference was the Seoul Declaration on an Ethical Renaissance and the International Student Initiative 1995. The final report of the Conference has been distributed as an official document (A/50/454) of the General Assembly.

An especially encouraging outcome of the Conference was the emphasis that today's youth placed on the need for the restoration of morality and humanity in society. As the Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, stated in his message at the beginning of the Conference, it is essential that young people be empowered to utilize their freedom, energy and talents to create a world of tolerance and mutual respect and a sense of a shared human venture.

Although it is ultimately the responsibility of each Member State to address its own youth affairs, the United Nations can play a vital role in assisting national efforts in policy-making, implementation and coordination with other actors, including civil society.

Let me say, in closing, that the coming century will not be the era of my generation, but that of the young individuals who are only now embarking upon their adult lives. The youth of today must be wholly recognized as valuable members of the global society, and their visions and input can be a positive contribution to building a strong and just world community.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Eileen Coparropa, Special Envoy of the President of Panama.

Miss Coparropa (Panama) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me first of all to extend my congratulations to the President on his election to guide our discussions at these special meetings devoted to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year and the discussion of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond.

On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, I join the millions of young people who are beginning to recognize their value and importance in the life of the international community. I share the joy of all the young people of the world at this initiative, which gives us our own voice and makes it possible for me to express to the Governments and institutions represented here the viewpoints of my country's young people and my delegation on the documents that have been drafted and discussed in recent years. I ask the President to convey our appreciation and gratitude to all those who have cooperated in preparing those documents for their important contributions to clarifying this complex issue, formulating objectives and defining measures with which to address it.

The presence of young people at this meeting of the General Assembly is of particular importance because, while we are the beneficiaries of many national and international initiatives, we are also victims of the profound changes taking place in contemporary society. No one has the slightest doubt that the policies formulated and adopted by our Governments and international agencies in this area have important effects on the daily life and the future of young people. We therefore wish to be a party to these decisions, and, above all, we know that we can act as agents of change because of our willingness to achieve a better way of living together, both domestically and internationally. To that end, we offer our hope, dynamism and dedication.

It is from this perspective that we aspire to play a larger role in the life of our societies, now more than ever, because today the very way in which we define, understand and value human beings is being profoundly affected by advances in science, technology, health and information.

My country is renowned for its geographic position and for the Panama Canal — that marvel of engineering, bridge of the world, heart of the universe through which pass tangible and intangible commodities from the four corners of the world. My country is a crossroads and a meeting place for races and cultures, and my people are noble, peaceful and cosmopolitan. We are attached to our traditions and proud of our traditional costume, the *pollera*, and the rhythmic expression of our dance, the *tamborito*.

Today, in preparing to receive, incorporate and utilize the territory of the Canal Zone on 31 December 1999, when the Torrijos-Carter treaties on the Panama Canal go into effect, my country faces the greatest challenge and opportunity since independence. This significant triumph for our nationhood has resulted mainly from the efforts of generations and generations of Panamanians. In the struggle, young people made the greatest part of the sacrifice, and their exploits inspired

us in the process of enhancing national sovereignty and democracy.

However, in my country 66 per cent of the population are under the age of 35 and people between the ages of 15 and 24 represent 21 per cent of the total population. Of that youthful sector of the population, 42 per cent are employable, yet their unemployment rate has reached 21 per cent, twice the national average. Of those who do work, 35 per cent have a monthly income of less than $250, and some 14 per cent make less than $100 a month. This means that almost half of the young population in our country is living below the poverty line.

Panama is not spared the tensions that arise when young people are caught between hope and marginalization, between efforts to maintain our national identity and pressure from other cultures, between the desire to dare to be oneself and the overwhelming power of fads and fashions, and between the challenges of the scourge of drugs and the weakening of ethical and moral values, a tragic equation whose result is a more fragile family, which is the basic institution of civilized life for the peoples of the world.

We come here today aware that there are large, complex problems yet to be solved. We are subject to the factors that temper the optimism of most young people in the developing world. We know that we are living in a very complex world and that the simplicity of our lives as young people does not exempt us from feelings of anxiety and impatience. We recognize the values and the capital that adults have left to us, and we are proud that they have forged a social existence which allows no room for intolerance based on racial, religious or cultural considerations. This enables us to live in a society in which young people are not affected by discrimination or prejudice.

And yet young Panamanian women can see that in our society there are some disparities between the sexes. Despite the fact that primary education has been free and mandatory under the Constitution since the early days of the Republic, there is a sector of our young population that, because of economic and social factors leading to hunger, poverty and social disintegration, is more exposed to marginalization and crime — in short, to exclusion.

For most young Panamanians, the management of free time and its use for creative and healthy activities is a problem of concern to adults. The average income of the Panamanian family is insufficient to ensure that children and teenagers appropriately and consistently benefit from their free time.

It should therefore come as no surprise that I — an athlete, a swimmer — am making a special appeal to international organs and non-governmental organizations to help needy countries, and my country in particular, to seriously consider responding in their plans of action to our young people's demand that the necessary resources be allocated to sports, that sports centres be maintained and that new recreation areas be provided, these being necessary for healthy forms of entertainment and the development of a healthy mind in a healthy body.

Athletes are said to be the ambassadors of the world. I am certain that my appointment to represent Panamanian youth at the General Assembly is an example of the fact that young people involved in sports are showing that for young people the way to success, on the threshold of a new century, is through education and the cultivation of discipline, maturity, responsibility and the willingness to face challenges.

In his report "An Agenda for Peace", submitted in 1992, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, stated that an agenda for peace cannot be possible or lasting unless we encourage and promote "a new spirit of commonality" *(A/47/277, para. 6)*.

We young people have felt, sometimes rightly and sometimes wrongly, that we have been excluded from a world built by adults and that, intentionally or unintentionally, we have not been allowed to participate in this spirit of commonality, which is so necessary in order to build a genuine culture of peace.

Therefore, serving as the voice of some half million Panamanian youths, I request that the obstacles to our participation be removed and that all forms of discrimination be done away with. I request that we be consulted as appropriate and that we be allowed a more direct involvement in formulating policies on issues related to youth; in the relevant decision-making processes; in drafting and assessing national development policies and plans; and in implementing plans to fight drug addiction and the harmful effects of drugs.

In particular, we need our parents to assume the responsibility they took on by bringing us into the world, to lovingly strengthen our ethical and moral values and to

give us the affection, devotion and the communication we so desperately need.

To the young people of my country and the young people of the entire world, I wish to say that a new lifestyle is clearly needed, and that it will require all of us to change, especially youth. Youth is, first and foremost, heroism. Pope John Paul II acknowledged that

> "Young people have immense potential for goodness and creativity."

Along with our Holy Father, we must repeat that our enthusiasm is needed, as is our love of life. We must have the courage to be different, to be idealistic, to challenge in order to reform, to demand in order to participate. But above all, we must not be afraid to try to build a world in which we can live in harmony with nature, with humankind and with God, to build a new culture of solidarity.

What I have expressed today is what the youth of my country feels, as shown in an opinion poll that I wrote and carried out in order to reflect their concerns and their hopes as faithfully as possible.

To conclude, I wish to say that many words have been said, but now we must see to it that these words do not lose their credibility. It is time to lead by example. Our actions must reflect our words. By example, we should learn proper behaviour, love for our homeland and for nature, respect for family values and solidarity with those who have less or who have nothing.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on Mr. Peter Friis-Nielsen, Youth Delegate of Denmark.

Mr. Friis-Nielsen (Denmark): As the representative of the Danish Youth Council and as a Youth Representative in the Danish delegation to the General Assembly, I am very pleased to speak at this plenary meeting.

> "Why does youth always have to become older before it is allowed to deal with the problems concerning youth?"

That reflection was made by Danish author Carl Scharnberg. The following quotation is from the general exchange of views of Heads of State at the World Summit for Social Development. Listen carefully:

> "No nation can ignore its youth, which is a human resource for sustainable development."

This year — the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations — we also celebrate the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, held in 1985. Since then youth issues have become even more crucial, affecting not only a small group but an important and rapidly growing part of the world population. Today there are more than 1.03 billion people between the ages of 15 and 24. If we assess the condition of the youth of today, we see that throughout the world young people very often find themselves stigmatized as a vulnerable group, as an object exposed to a variety of problems. But young people are not merely an object; they are subjects — the subjects of the future. The world community needs a new approach to young people. We need action, and we need it now.

This new approach and plan of action will take its first leap forward through the draft World Programme of Action for Youth, which we hope will be adopted tomorrow. With youth on the agenda of the General Assembly, no one can reasonably ignore the importance of this topic.

However, reading the draft World Programme of Action for Youth confirms that youth is still put in a biased and traditional position. The section of the programme on "Development setting" states that

> "Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation." *(E/1995/123, para. 12)*

But this philosophy is not reflected throughout the document. In fact, it is almost absent in the final draft document, superseded by a rather paternalistic attitude. Has the draft World Programme of Action for Youth become a document on youth based on the premises of the elders?

For a solution to the problems discussed in the document, young people must be recognized as an asset and as genuine partners in the decision-making processes — as subjects of their own lives, not objects. Where is the youth spirit in the document — the spirit that proposes new ideas, new thoughts, new visions, new impetus and actions that will make the youth programme the tool it is meant to be? I search for this youth spirit — and I still long to find it.

The draft World Programme of Action for Youth has not become what we hoped it would; it has become a hammer without a handle, but it is the only tool we have. So let us act and create the handle in the process.

A Danish slogan once said that, "action is the best expression of opinion". Hence, to turn opinion into action here today, a full and visionary implementation of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth is the key word. We would therefore like to propose the following six steps of action.

Action One is this: think globally, act locally. These words have been a key concept in talking about sustainable development. But thinking globally and acting locally is just as central when talking about citizen participation in the work for human rights, social development and decision-making processes. Thus, to make young people become responsible citizens in society, Governments should establish the structures and platforms needed to ensure youth's participation in decision-making processes and, furthermore, to ensure cooperation between youth, independent youth organizations and governmental bodies. To put it in other words, there is a fundamental need for all countries to create or improve a national youth policy, one that allows young people to participate actively.

To come to Action Two, the draft World Programme of Action for Youth must be integrated into national youth policy. This integration needs to be initiated immediately. Thus, the United Nations should establish structures to ensure and improve cooperation between national youth bodies, governmental structures and the United Nations system.

Next, Action Three. The United Nations and Member States should ensure the continued work of the World Youth Forum and the participation of international youth organizations on an equal basis. The World Youth Forum can be seen as one of the basic tools for the process of implementation of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth. Hence the United Nations and Member States should ensure the financial support and funding of the Forum.

Now to Action Four. To ensure the implementation of the programme I recommend that the General Assembly designate the United Nations youth unit as the secretariat for this process. But for this to work successfully, there is an emerging need for a strengthened youth unit, renewed with a strong and visible presence of young people and enhanced cooperation with international youth non-governmental organizations. In conjunction with this, I urge the United Nations to ensure the continued financial funding of the youth unit.

Regarding Action Five, Young volunteers from international youth organizations should be sponsored to work directly on the implementation of the draft World Programme of Action for Youth. Member States are urged to provide financial and moral support for such youth volunteers.

Finally, Action Six. This General Assembly is celebrating the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year and has put youth on the agenda. But very few Governments have even thought about delegating youth to the General Assembly. This is an embarrassing disregard of the key persons. As a youth delegate to the General Assembly, it is therefore very important to me to encourage every Member State to include youth delegates in their future delegations to the United Nations General Assembly and relevant United Nations bodies. This would be an honourable action — an opinion turned into action.

Today we live in a world of interdependence — called by some "the Global Village". Any youth issue is closely connected to the sustainable social development of the world. This interdependence was clearly stated at the World Summit for Social Development. Thus the full and visionary follow-up on, and implementation of, the commitment made at the Summit is fundamental to future prosperity, not only for the youth of today, but for all world citizens.

The Danish author and Nobel Prize winner Johannes V. Jensen once said: "Youth is facing a double battle: the fight against itself and the fight against its elders. The latter is the toughest". May this quotation soon be history.

The youth of the world is ready to assume responsibility and take part in the work for world social development. Action is our best expression of opinion. Our focus is action; our time is now.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call upon Mr. Ammar Saati, Vice-President of the National Union of Syrian Students and Youth Delegate of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Saati (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): When the representatives of world

Governments meet at this high level to deliberate the realities of youth and to formulate a plan of action to deal with their problems over the coming period, such meetings and deliberations bespeak great interest in the future of our peoples and of mankind in general. Moreover, the interest we take in reviewing our work in this regard over the past decade expresses a collective desire to surmount the most difficult obstacles that face youth, especially as regards the possibilities of achieving peace through putting an end to all forms of colonialism and foreign occupation of the territories of others by force and the enablement of youth to exercise their right to establish their own organizations, to obtain assistance in resolving their problems and their right to participate in development through the creation of working opportunities for their creative contributions which must, in the final analysis, benefit humanity and ensure a decent future for its youth.

The Syrian Arab Republic has always been among the States that called for paying sufficient attention by the United Nations and its bodies to youth problems in various areas. The presence of representatives of Syria's youth and students in Syria's delegation to this meeting dedicated to the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year, in addition to the fact that more than two thirds of the staff of our Permanent Mission to the United Nations belong to the young generation, reflect the interest my country takes in this social segment which was described by President Hafez al-Assad as "the hope of the present for the future and the hope of the future in the present". The interest Syria's political system takes in youth is part and parcel of an integral strategy which deals with the overall question of youth, taking into consideration the nature of our society and the tasks before it at this stage. Syria, as a developing country, aspires to achieve comprehensive human development side by side with socio-economic development. This calls for the mobilization of our people's human potential, especially that of its youth.

The leadership of President Hafez al-Assad has ensured for Syria, since 1970, the appropriate political stability and the democratic climate conducive to the widest possible popular participation. In this context, Syria's youth join non-governmental popular organizations that operate in full freedom and contribute effectively to the progress of society. In this regard, the National Union of Syrian Students is proud of the fact that President Hafez al-Assad was the first President of a student conference held in Syria, on 30 March 1950. This Union embraces university youth, students in postgraduate studies and students in higher and intermediate institutes, represents them before the various university boards, expresses their views on the curricula, contributes to decision-making, defends the interests and achievements of the students and helps to solve any problems that may stand in the way of their education and social activities. In the framework of this Union, which includes forces from various political parties, the students democratically elect their leaderships at various levels in full freedom. To ensure the widest possible educational opportunities for young people in Syria, education is free at the elementary, secondary, university and postgraduate levels. The State provides university residence for students for token fees that amount to half a United States dollar per month. This fee covers full board, utilities and services. The National Union of Syrian Students exercises its athletic, artistic, cultural, political and social activities in full freedom. It also organizes summer scientific camps, that embrace various disciplines, with the aim of linking university education in a practical manner with the life of society. In this regard, the Government provides the material requirements of these camps.

The Revolutionary Youth Movement to which the youth of Syria belong is an organizational framework and an educational forum for young people through which Syria's youth exercise their its democratic rights, elect their political leaderships, practice their hobbies and defend their interests at all levels: the educational, social, economic, vocational, cultural, touristic, athletic, artistic, informational, ideological, political and technical. The Union's membership is over one million-and-a-half young people. Forty per cent of them are young girls. The Revolutionary Youth Movement is represented in the Advisory Committees of the Council of Ministers which include: the Cultural Committee, the Planning Committee, the Services Committee and the Illiteracy Eradication Committee. The Union owns a touristic facility, two youth towns, a sophisticated publishing and printing facility; it runs more than 50 scientific clubs and publishes a youth newspaper.

The Union provides young people with educational opportunities through its support for Syrian schools, the development of the Syrian educational system and the enhancement of the educational standard of students. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic highly values the role played by the Union of Revolutionary Youth in eradicating the illiteracy of thousands of citizens in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture in the context of the campaign that aims at eradicating illiteracy before the year 2000, in addition to other volunteer activities which reflect positively on the process of progress and development in our country.

The Athletic Federation basically oversees the young people who have various athletic skills and hobbies. The State has built athletic facilities all over Syria which it placed at the service of the youth of Syria with the aim of maintaining the good physical health of young people and enhancing athletic cooperation with athletes all over the world through participation in various international games where the champions of Syria have scored many victories.

Several Government Ministries maintain close relations with youth organizations in two areas, namely health education, especially with regard to the AIDS disease and the prevention thereof, and the enhancement of environmental awareness to preserve the environment and reduce pollution. These organizations also organize continuous educational campaigns against smoking among young people, against the devastating scourge of drugs, and in the area of crime prevention. The Revolutionary Youth Movement maintains relations with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the International Family Planning Association, undertakes field studies and organizes educational campaigns that cover demographic concepts, reproductive health and family planning.

The youth and students of Syria, nurtured as they are by the humanistic values of their nation, especially respect for the values and customs of other peoples: justice, brotherhood, equality and the promotion of the principles of understanding and tolerance and the renunciation of intolerance, racism and all forms of racial discrimination and xenophobia, also believe in the need for peace to prevail all over the world and the need for a universal commitment to the principles and objectives of the Charter of the United Nations. In this regard, they rally round the leadership of President Hafez al-Assad in order to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East region on the basis of the principles upon which the Madrid Conference was held in 1991, especially the principle of land for peace and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), and 425 (1978). To this end, it is incumbent upon Israel to withdraw immediately and in full from the Syrian Arab Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 and from South Lebanon and to stop obstructing the peace process. In the light of the foregoing, the strategy of the Syrian Arab Republic as regards youth is principally based on responding to their needs and to their aspirations in today's society.

These programmes take into account the rights of young people, including the right to education — a right that should be guaranteed by the State — the right to work, the right to participate in national decision-making, the right to articulate aspirations and needs, the right to organize themselves, the right to marriage and the right to housing. These rights are to be exercised within the capabilities of the State, as dictated by its by socio-economic circumstances. The enablement to exercise those rights should take place through economic, social, psychological, educational and rehabilitation programmes, as well as programmes of political and intellectual awareness.

The youth of the world, who are celebrating with their peoples the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, view with hope our celebration of the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year as another advance in support of youth, who represent the hope of achieving a world in which a just peace would prevail.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on The Honourable Algernon Allen, Minister of Youth and Culture of the Bahamas.

Mr. Allen (Bahamas): In this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Charter, it is vital that we all recall the full terms of a resolution adopted on 18 November 1985 by the General Assembly, acting as United Nations World Conference for the International Youth Year. Those terms, in full, called for participation, development and peace in the global thrust to deal effectively with youth, and five years ago the General Assembly further resolved that at the session marking the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Charter a plenary meeting — this one — would be devoted exclusively to youth questions.

Gathered in this place are youth Ministers or other official representatives of the nearly 200 States Members of the United Nations, and I have no doubt that each of us has special and peculiar experience, viewpoint or national report that can be of value to the international effort to save and promote the interests and development of young people.

Yet, irrespective of our individual contributions, and no matter what may be the characteristic programmes of action in our individual territories, we must all in this place today accept and acknowledge that there is around the world a supreme crisis of youth. It is a crisis which almost daily hits the headlines of most of our local media; which brings pain and disarray to many of our traditional family lifestyles and structures; and which, in consequence, affects the long-term national planning of too many countries. It is a crisis generally brought on by

the various afflictions of poverty, hunger, delinquency, unemployment, criminality, sexual promiscuity, fatal diseases, illegitimacy, substance abuse and a general condition of powerlessness. It is a crisis which no nation or community has effectively escaped, a crisis which has been exhaustively explored and analysed by our individual countries and which we, through the instrumentality of the United Nations and our peculiar national inputs, can conquer through agreed guidelines and plans of action that may crystallize during this tenth anniversary of International Youth Year.

These critical afflictions of youth in the Caribbean and in North and South America — as, perhaps, in Europe, Africa and parts of Asia — are particularly acute, and they invite a wider vision for a global remedy or, at least, relief. The report of the West Indian Commission of 1982 on social and economic issues of our region should sum up the resolute position of this special occasion when it states: "Now is the time for action".

On this question of the world's youth, we must adopt the attitude of survival along lines of common effort and combined strategies that we know can work. The ideal venue for that common effort and those combined strategies is here at the United Nations.

My responsibility in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas — a small but proud Member of this great international body — is to ensure the welfare, the progress and the future of our nation's young people. Our Ministry of Youth and Culture, together with the Ministry of Education, the police and the private sector, and armed with the report of a blue-ribbon National Consultative Committee on Youth — copies of which were distributed here today — has promoted a number of programmes designed to save and empower those young people yet within our grasp and to rescue from disaster those who have slipped through the cracks. These programmes span the broad spectrum of vocational, cultural, sporting and character development. In the limited time available to me I shall mention but a few of them.

With the establishment of an industrial training college, we are effectively dealing with those young people who, while they may not be academic stars, can be integrated into the system through a sensible and practical programme of trade and vocational training.

A "Let's read, Bahamas" programme, instituted in 1994, sought, and still seeks, to mobilize the interest of citizens, particularly young people, in expanding their reading and interpretation abilities beyond the classroom curriculum.

The Police Athletic League has been instituted, not simply to develop sporting enthusiasm among young people but, significantly, to teach and instil respect for the law, for authority and for the rights of others.

The Organization of American States assisted in the funding of, and is particularly impressed by and interested in, a pilot programme known as the Youth Enterprise Project, which is geared specifically towards unemployed school-leavers, who, with some skills training and personal development, can be cultivated into areas of self-employment. In that programme, which is tailor-made for most similar developing communities, there is special emphasis on the empowerment of young women who have fallen foul of society and who must often fend for themselves and their children. The private sector in the Bahamas has contributed appreciably to this national theme of youth salvation and development.

Thus it can be seen that we in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas have kept this matter of youth development and empowerment constantly on the national front burner, especially over the past three years when, all over the world, the proper direction of young people entered a plateau of crisis. While we must, in our individual countries, leave no stone unturned in finding solutions to our national and provincial problems with young people, the United Nations too must assume a sense and an attitude of urgency on the matter of the world's youth.

The United Nations has long accepted that there are no national boundaries in the areas of disease, famine, poverty, substance abuse, generic crime and crimes against humanity, yet it must also accept that many small and struggling States have no means of fighting these problems alone and that in this year marking the tenth anniversary of International Youth Year it must assume a glorious role of leadership in this transnational battle to save the world's youth and, thereby, ensure a battalion of capable leaders for tomorrow's world.

In every nation, in every language and in every ideological setting around the globe we use special terms of endearment when referring to young people — the bright tomorrows of our land. In recent years in the Commonwealth of the Bahamas, we have referred to them as the "darlings" of the nation. Darlings, because they are intrinsically precious and fragile. Darlings,

because they are proud extensions of ourselves, to whom we have a commitment to make proud, independent, worthwhile and productive citizens in their own right.

I now speak to this body, for the darlings of all the nations of the world, when I say that, whatever else the United Nations does, it must ensure the banishment from our children of the scourges of deprivation, famine and dispossession which militate against orderly development in our respective countries.

We must never forget that the peace and the brightness of tomorrow's world depend upon these, our youth, the most precious of our brethren, whom another promised would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The Acting President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Romania, Mr. Crapatureanu.

Mr. Crapatureanu (Romania): I have the privilege and honour to take the floor on behalf of His Excellency Mr. Alexandru Mironov, Minister for Youth and Sports of Romania, who regrets his last-minute absence from this important gathering. I now proceed to present his statement.

"It is with great pleasure that I wish to address my most cordial greetings to the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations and, through my voice, to convey the warm salute of over 5 million young people from Romania, who represent a quarter of the population of my country.

"Precisely 10 years ago, on Romania's initiative, the year 1985 was proclaimed "International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace". The resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1985 expressed the desire to amplify the activities of all States at governmental and non-governmental level in order to stimulate youth programmes and activities. They also underlined the necessity to reinforce the efforts and the measures directed to safeguarding the observance of human rights, in particular those related to education and work, calling on national, regional and international organizations to support the global development of the young generation under the sign of understanding, progress and friendship.

"Over the years this call, addressed to a world undergoing continuous and rapid change, has not ceased to be heard, even if the voice has sometimes been muted by political and economic circumstances, by wars and calamities, by social movements, and by walls destroyed or raised. In spite of all of this, young people have continued to fight and dream, to learn and prepare themselves for tomorrow when they will become responsible rulers of the world they will build.

"I am happy to share with you, as Minister for Youth and Sports, but also as a person whose entire career has been very closely linked with various issues related to youth, the experience I have gained during these last two years of activity *for* the young and *together with* the young. They are the ones who will determine the quality leap required for the change in mentality of a people that, for 6 years now, has been experiencing other fundamental and dramatic changes. The concepts that I consider most important in this context are: permanent education, modular qualification and continuous training, promotion of the value of and respect for work, faith in tradition and trust in the future.

"These objectives are found in the specific youth policies that we have shaped and defined within the programmes pursued by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the so-called "national programmes". Among them, may I recall the following: Civilization of the 21st Century (stimulation and education of creativity in the field of science and technology); ABC in Culture (youth cultural education); STYLE (education in behaviour, hygiene and health); Active Holidays (leisure-time education); Where To? (continuous education); S.O.S. for Youth (social assistance); The Young Farmer (reinvigoration of the Romanian village); Together (stimulation of the associative life); INFOTIN (establishment of a network of youth information and documentation centres); Clean Our Country (ecological education and training); Moralia (moral and religious education); and Romania in Tomorrow's World (international relations and youth exchanges) and the UNESCO-Open University project 'Youth in Evolution'.

"Within this last programme, in 1994 and 1995, over 2,000 young people — academic winners of national and international contests on education subjects — have had the opportunity to visit Europe, America and Asia on study travel organized by our Ministry, with significant support from Romanian society. I am convinced that, for our young

international champions, this travel was a beautiful lesson on cultures and civilizations, and on the universal language of youth, knowledge, friendship and peace.

"We wish that all young people could carry forward the message of understanding and involvement in building the world of the third millennium. We wish that the world's cultural, scientific and technical heritage could become a link in international dialogue and that reason could triumph on the "blue planet". We wish that the peoples of the world could measure the force of their minds or bodies in keeping with the classic, ancient adage "*citius, altius, fortius*" on all sports fields, without violence, in the spirit of fair play and under the sign of unity through diversity. Then, for sure, the United Nations could become what all dreamers hope it will be: a real parliament of all nations on Earth."

Before concluding, on behalf of my delegation I would like to make two brief remarks. Firstly, we sincerely hope that the draft World Programme of Action for Youth will be adopted by consensus by the General Assembly. It represents a most useful policy framework and it also contains practical guidelines for the improvement of the situation of youth all over the world. Secondly, as one of the initiators of items regarding the status of youth, the delegation of Romania considers that the goals of International Youth Year are as valid today as they were a decade ago. In this respect, we consider that the adoption of the pertinent resolution on the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond will contribute to further promoting the aspirations of young people to fully participate in, and to actively contribute to, the betterment of our societies.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.